



# LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 8, 2003**

**For Additional Information Contact:**

Michael E. Alpert  
*Chairman*

Stanley R. Zax  
*Vice-Chairman*

Patricia C. Bates  
*Assemblymember*

David J. Epstein

Daniel W. Hancock

Christine Kehoe  
*Assemblymember*

Welton C. Mansfield

Stuart G. Moldaw

Jennifer A. Openshaw

Charles S. Poochigian  
*Senator*

Richard R. Terzian

John Vasconcellos  
*Senator*

Stanley M. Zimmerman

James P. Mayer  
*Executive Director*

James P. Mayer  
Executive Director  
(916) 445-2125

## **Commission Urges Elimination of Criminal Justice Agency**

The Little Hoover Commission on Tuesday urged policy-makers to eliminate the Office of Criminal Justice Planning and create a new mechanism to ensure the State is effectively helping communities reduce crime and its consequences.

The Commission concluded that OCJP is not efficiently managing nearly \$300 million in grants to local law enforcement and other agencies. More importantly, the Commission concluded the office has consistently failed to perform the strategic planning and other leadership activities necessary to effectively prevent and respond to crime, violence and drug abuse.

With growing budget deficits and persistent crime problems in many neighborhoods, the Commission determined the State must make sure that public agencies are working together to employ proven responses to the most serious threats to public safety.

"The concerns regarding OCJP precede the current administration and the criticisms are bipartisan," said Chairman Michael E. Alpert. "The office is top-heavy with administrators and has suffered from steady turnover among the senior managers, making it difficult to trust promises for reform."

OCJP was created in 1973 to distribute state and federal crime-fighting grants. The office also was charged with staffing the California Council on Criminal Justice, which is composed of 37 state and local officials who are responsible for developing a comprehensive state plan for criminal justice and delinquency prevention.

Numerous audits and other reviews have documented problems with OCJP's grant programs. And in reviewing criminal justice programs over the last decade, the Commission has consistently found OCJP unable to adequately perform the broader role of aligning law enforcement with prevention, intervention, treatment and other programs that can reduce injury and loss.

The Commission recommended consolidating OCJP's 100 grant programs and reassigning them to other agencies that have demonstrated an ability to effectively manage grant programs.

While eliminating OCJP would produce some administrative savings, state policy-makers must still resolve three overarching problems with public safety efforts that the Commission identified in previous studies:

- ***Resources are not allocated effectively.*** Funds are not allocated to ensure that all communities can respond to crime or that those with the greatest problems receive additional assistance.
- ***Resources are not targeted to proven programs.*** The State does not ensure that resources are used on strategies proven to prevent or reduce crime, violence and drug abuse.
- ***State efforts are fragmented and disparate.*** Public safety programs are scattered throughout the bureaucracy, duplicating efforts and operating in isolation.

If these problems were rigorously addressed, the State could be confident that public safety would be improved and the demands on victims' programs and prisons would be reduced. Toward that end, the Commission recommended that policy-makers reconstitute the California Council on Criminal Justice into an independent entity charged with improving the performance and accountability of state-supported public safety programs.

The new California Public Safety Council would seek to reduce duplication, standardize procedures, assess performance, and coordinate technical assistance efforts. The Council would report to the Governor and the Legislature on ways to better use existing resources to serve community priorities.

The new council could be funded by the reduction in the excess overhead of OCJP. If properly implemented, the Council could improve the impact of hundreds of millions of dollars distributed to communities while reducing the impact of crime, violence and drug abuse.

"When these efforts succeed, Californians are safer and healthier," Chairman Alpert said. "The cost of failure – overcrowded emergency rooms and courtrooms, prisons and morgues – runs into the tens of billions of dollars and untold suffering."

The Commission initiated the review of OCJP after finding during a comprehensive review of California's drug and alcohol treatment programs that OCJP had made no serious effort to help public agencies coordinate drug prevention, treatment and enforcement efforts.

The Commission's conclusions are based on testimony and interviews with state and local officials, community consultants and national experts. Its recommendations are based in part on the collective experience of other states that have disciplined public safety programs to improve accountability.

The Little Hoover Commission is a bipartisan and independent state agency charged with recommending ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of state programs. The Commission's recommendations are sent to the Governor and the Legislature for consideration. The Commission's report, *Improving Public Safety: Beyond the Office of Criminal Justice Planning*, is available online at [www.lhc.ca.gov](http://www.lhc.ca.gov).